

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) In a letter sent Monday afternoon to Forum Health's chief executive officer, Congressman Tim Ryan (D-Niles) and Congressman Ted Strickland (D-Lisbon) expressed their concern with the potential consequences of Forum Health's restructuring on the City of Youngstown, particularly access to medical care if Northside and Tod Children's Hospitals are closed.

Ryan and Strickland also urged Forum to involve its employees in the decision-making process and offered to meet with stakeholders to find solutions that best serve Forum Health, its employees and the community.

The text of the letter is included below:

April 3, 2006

Dr. Keith Ghezzi

Forum Health

3530 Belmont Ave., Suite 7

Youngstown, Ohio 44505

Dear Dr. Ghezzi:

As the U.S. Representatives for the Mahoning Valley, we are writing to express our concerns and offer our help as Forum Health goes through the difficult process of restructuring. All hospitals - especially those located in our urban areas - are facing serious financial difficulties as a result of cuts in government funding, changing market conditions and the growing number of uninsured patients.

It is our understanding that Northside and Tod Children's Hospitals pose particular financial challenges to your organization. As a result, these facilities are under consideration for significant downsizing or even closure. While we fully recognize the unique challenges associated with operating older facilities in areas with a significant population of uninsured patients, we would urge Forum Health to look at more than just the financial information before making any final decisions.

The loss of these medical facilities would have grave implications for the health and welfare of the residents of Youngstown and the surrounding communities that they now serve. The loss of Northside's 200 beds would be devastating. We are sure you are aware that Humility of Mary Health Partners has indicated that they do not have sufficient bed capacity at St. Elizabeth's Medical Center to meet the demand that would result from this loss. While we recognize that there are other facilities in the greater Mahoning Valley, we have serious concerns that residents will not have access to needed medical care because traveling to these more distant facilities will just not be possible for the largely older, economically distressed population that Northside serves.

These facilities are also vital to the region's economy. In addition to the obvious implications for the approximately 2,000 people who work there, the facilities generate about \$2.4 million in income tax for the city of Youngstown. Given the high concentration of poverty in the city - nearly 80% of the students in the Youngstown City

Schools are eligible for the free lunch program - the loss of these revenues would be devastating for the community. Furthermore, if the facilities were to close, it would have a significant negative impact on the property values in the surrounding neighborhoods.

In addition to weighing the importance of these facilities to the community, we would also urge you to fully involve your employees in the process. Your consulting firm, Wellspring Partners, would serve you well by gaining information on operational performance directly from the dedicated men and women who work at each of your facilities throughout the Valley. These employees make significant contributions to the high quality medical care that Forum Health currently provides to the community and could offer valuable insights into the many issues that you face as you move forward.

Again, we would like to offer our services as Forum Health works through these difficult times. We are sure that we speak on behalf of the entire community when we say that we stand ready to assist you in any way possible. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and other stakeholders to explore avenues that will best serve Forum Health, its employees and the community that depends on Forum's healthcare services. As always, we will continue to work with our colleagues and the federal agencies that regulate the healthcare industry as we work to find solutions to the issues that you are facing.

Sincerely,

Tim Ryan

Ted Strickland

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

